

Cornerstone

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF STRATHBLANE PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCOTTISH CHARITY NO: SC007261



FROM THE STUDY DESK

Chris Gordon, Locum

The Christian calendar often includes seasons of anticipation.

Advent prepares us for Christmas with stories, Bible readings and carols which build up to our celebration of the birth of Jesus. And, increasingly, some Christians use the period of Lent in preparation for Easter.

Lent isn't practiced by all, however many find it brings a focus to their worship and devotions. That it sharpens their daily practices and brings them closer to God.

When I was growing up, Lent was very much associated with fasting. And so some people would 'give something up for Lent'. And many continue to find that helpful.

Going without something can help to remind ourselves that others in the world have considerably less than we do. It can stimulate a thankfulness for what we have and remind us to recognise that God is the giver of all things.

More recently, many people use the season of Lent to stimulate at positive change in their worship life. And so, rather than giving something up, they practice something new. Some commit to a new devotional activity such as Lectio365, others volunteer for something or perhaps donate daily to a charity.

These positive activities can help generate a growth in our faith as the process of what we are learning in God's word can then be practiced and lived out. Because, like any learning, our practicing of something helps us to understand



IN THIS ISSUE

- From the Study Desk - p.1
- Our Interim Moderator - p.2
- Session Report - p.5
- Church Family - p. 7
- Treasurer's report - p. 7
- Glasgow City Mission - p.13
- Thomas - p. 16
- The Faithful and the Traitors - p. 18
- Ministries - p. 19
- Missionary news - p. 21
- Key contacts - p.25

it better. We've been looking at that in recent weeks in church as we explore the letter of James in the Bible. James encourages us to 'put feet to our faith' so that what we have learned and received doesn't just become forgotten but rather is used to demonstrate God's kingdom.

Isn't that an amazing reality?

That Almighty God invites us to join in the activity of building his kingdom, of making his name known! He doesn't need us of course; he can do it without us. But he invites us to join in. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians tells us that we are labourers together with God (1 Cor 3:9) and he equips us with the tools specific to each of us to be a part of that. That God chooses to use us to make his name known is a wonderful truth and a constant opportunity. For some, they might find it easier as their circumstances permit them to be visible and present within their community. Meanwhile for others, that kind of witnessing might be more challenging for a number of reasons. However, our devotional life can be practiced and strengthened regardless of our circumstances.

And so these weeks approaching Easter present an opportunity. An opportunity to seek to deepen our relationship with Christ. To gain more of an understanding of the sacrifices he endured, and then to celebrate the freedom he brings us through his work upon the cross.

So, while we're eager for Easter and all it brings, let's seek out and take the chances to grow as we journey towards the cross. To respond to his invitation to know Him better and to live lives that reflect our trust and faith in Him.

Chris

GET TO KNOW OUR INTERIM MODERATOR

Ramsay grew up in East Kilbride. While working for the Royal Bank of Scotland, he felt a call to serve in full-time ministry, and left to study a for a BA in Business Studies at the then Glasgow College of Technology (now Glasgow Caledonian University) majoring in finance and marketing. After being accepted by the Church of Scotland selection process, he attended Glasgow University where he gained his BD. His Probationary Period was at Rothesay Trinity Parish Church,



before he was called to be minister at Fordyce Parish Church in Portsoy. He served for 7 years before moving to Milngavie. He is currently minister at Milngavie St. Luke's where he has served for the past 29 years. Ramsay has a passion for expository preaching and a heart f.

or seeing unbelieving people become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ within the church. As well as parish ministry, Ramsay has served extensively on the Church of Scotland's Social Care Council, the former Stewardship and Finance Committee, and the Judicial Commission, as well as on special commissions. Many years ago he served as the Convener of the Moray Firth Radio Religious Programmes Advisory Board.

His hobbies include music, languages, reading, football, photography, and domestic pets. He is married to Ann, and they have three children, Calum, Lisa and Iain; and one grandson Daniel.

LETTER FROM THE INTERIM MODERATOR

Rev Ramsay Shields

Dear Friends, I think that this is arguably my favourite time of the year. The mornings are light; the sun is (sometimes) shining; the birds are singing, and we look forward to the long days of summer. We are also reminded, as we approach Easter that the signs of resurrection are all around us with snowdrops, daffodils and all of the other harbingers of spring around to greet us.

I would take this opportunity to wish you all a happy Easter. We have indeed a great deal to celebrate at this time; not least our Lord's victory over the grave.

And yet for many of our brothers and sisters in Christ across the globe, this season of Easter will continue to see persecution and strife in their lives. The war rages on in Ukraine, tensions are still evident in the Middle East, and across the globe, brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ continue to be persecuted for their faith.

I believe that it is very easy for us to become complacent in our faith in this country. The prophet Malachi warns that complacency can lead to half-hearted devotion. There can be such a thing as "mediocrity" in the Christian faith. There are many people who do suffer for their faith across the globe; many people whose lives are on the line, while we live comfortable Christian lives in the West. Or do we?

Many of you may remember the plight of the nurse Caroline Petrie a few years ago. Caroline, a Christian nurse from Weston-Super-Mare, was suspended from her for offering to pray for a 79 year old patient after a home visit. It became apparent from the testimony of the patient, May Phippen, that Caroline Petrie's Christianity was able to enhance her caring ministry as a nurse, and in no way did it usurp that caring ministry.

Mrs Phippen reported that this nurse did her work efficiently, and then quietly and simply asked if Mrs Phippen would like her to pray for her. This was not pursued when the offer was declined. For that, Caroline faced disciplinary action under “equity and diversity regulations”, and even faced losing her job! Indeed, we rejoiced in her reinstatement, but once again, We witness the culprit of unimaginative legislation at work. It seems to me that much of the equity and diversity legislation is driven not so much by these ideals, but by a secular agenda bent on driving religion, especially Christianity it would seem, from the public sphere.

The hounding of a nurse, committed equally to her job and to her faith, from her selfless work does not, I believe, serve the interest of her patients. It serves only the interests of those who would banish our Christian faith from public life for political reasons.

We have also read recently of Gozen Soydag, a school pastoral manager in North London who was sacked for supporting biblical marriage on social media. Christian Concern is supporting more and more people as they face being disciplined for taking a stand for Biblical truth.

My point is this – are we witnessing a new form of persecution in the West? Has politically correct legislation assumed the role of the tyrant in the UK in 2025? We can never be complacent and believe that this is a civilised place in which we are exempt from persecution. We must be on our knees, pleading with the Lord to uphold those who are persecuted overseas (the Barnabas Fund and CSW will help us to focus on this), and to uphold those who are persecuted at home. Who knows, tomorrow, it could be you or it could be me!

We have much to celebrate at Easter; we worship and serve a risen Lord. At the same time, we worship a Lord who invites us to take up our cross and follow Him. May He strengthen us so to do, whatever trials we may face in life. Once again, I wish you all every blessing this Easter. With best wishes.

Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Ramsay B. Shields

SESSION REPORT

Lynne James

We are coming up to a very busy time for Sessions in the Church Of Scotland. As you will see, in this edition of Cornerstone, our treasurer, Jean Strachan has prepared, and sent on to OSCR, our Annual Accounts and we are very grateful to Ewan Buchanan for agreeing to audit the accounts as an independent auditor.

All the congregational records are to be inspected over the next month at Presbytery level, and as previously, when the linkage was voted upon, this updated roll will form the Electoral Roll in forthcoming votes for a Nominating Committee, in the first instance, and later when a sole nominee for minister for both congregations is presented to the congregation. Both Sessions are meeting with two members of the Vacancy Procedural Committee on Tuesday 10th March. Carole and myself, as Session Clerks are tasked with preparing a joint Parish Profile which will be agreed by Session and then sent to Presbytery for their approval. Once this is received, the next step will be the appointment of the Nominating Committee of 13 members. You may remember that this will consist of 6 members from Strathblane's congregation and 7 members from Killearn. Perhaps you might like to give prayerful thought as to whether this might be something you would like to take part in over the weeks that follow.

We will continue to keep both congregations up to date with events as they unfold, but we do all need to continue to be patient in prayer as this process continues. Our Interim Moderator, Ramsay Shields is proving to be a great help in all these matters and has also graciously presided over Communion here, and at Killearn, while Chris has preached at his own church. Ramsay will lead Communion on 1st March under the same arrangements.

We had two guest preachers, Stewart Collins and Gordon Roy, while Chris was on well-earned leave and Stewart Collins will step in for the two Sundays after Easter, while Chris is with his young family during their Easter holidays from school.

This leads us on to a new development in Pastoral Care... While Chris has been so generous with his time and care for our congregations, he is only employed as Locum for two days a week and Sunday Services. It is important, both for him, and ourselves that he can use his time in each Parish wisely. In an effort to help Chris in this, we have designed a Pastoral Care Request Card which can be used by anyone to let Chris know of any

Pastoral Requests you may have, either on your own behalf, or perhaps, on behalf of someone you know.

If you are aware of anyone who would like to speak to Chris or would value confidential prayer, please complete a card and put it in the box in the vestibule. These will be collected every Sunday and passed on to the Minister. There are also email addresses which you can use to contact us if you prefer. We hope this will mean that Chris will not have to try to remember the verbal information he receives on busy Sunday mornings after two services. He is very happy to visit people at home and in hospital and this will help him to prioritise the many requests that he receives each week. These cards will initially be handed out at the door as you come in for a couple of weeks, and then will be available in the vestibule for anyone and everyone as needed. We pray that this will prove helpful for all of us as a congregation as we look to support Chris, both as our Locum, and as valued part of our church family.

Messy Church

Having greatly enjoyed our pre Christmas Session together, decorating the tree and church and making up Christingle bags, we are planning our next Messy Church on 8th March.

If you know of anyone you would like to invite, please let me know. Lynnej1257@gmail.com

This year's Christingle was a very happy event and, thanks to the Messy Church "angels" every child had a full Christingle kit so they could DIY as the service progressed.

Journey To Easter

Gordon Roy may not be preaching here in the Easter Holidays, but he will be liaising with us, wearing his "Scripture Union hat", to present the Journey to Easter in our church on Friday 31st March to the Strathblane Primary School Primary 5 pupils. This is a great way to present the Easter story to all the children in that class.



CHURCH FAMILY

Mrs Isabel Cameron	Deceased	29.12.2025
Mrs Norma Farquhar	Deceased	6.2.2026

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 1: 7



TREASURER'S REPORT

Jean Strachan

Strathblane Parish Church Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31 December 2025 and Budget for the year ending 31 December 2026

The official accounts for 2025 were approved by the Kirk Session and are available to all members who require a full set. Please contact the Church Office and a printed copy or email can be sent to you. The abbreviated accounts, set out on this and the following pages, highlight the important details of the accounts in a compact format.

The Church is administered under a Unitary Constitution. This means that the Session has responsibility for the whole life and service of the Church within the Parish and has oversight of the affairs both spiritual and temporal of the congregation.

Our minister, Stuart Sharp left us at the end of October to take up a position in Dundee.

Ramsay Shields of St Lukes Church, Milngavie has been appointed as our interim moderator. We are delighted that Chris Gordon has agreed to be our locum during the vacancy.

Communion is celebrated four times a year and we meet every Sunday for morning worship at 11.30am together with the younger members of the congregation, before they leave for their own time in the Kirkrooms. Elders continue to keep up personal contact with members of their districts and also attend regular session meetings. The Session Clerks of Strathblane and Killearn liaise regularly and have a happy and productive partnership.

Easter and Christmas cards were sent to every house in the parish with the service times for these special parts of the Christian year, as an Outreach to those who may not attend church on a regular basis. There was a great response to the appeal for toys and gifts at Christmas to be distributed by Glasgow City Mission and the Salvation Army and for the Blytheswood shoebox appeal. Harvest gifts were also collected for Start Up Stirling.

Wednesday evening prayer meetings are held in the Kirkrooms. Our prayers and collections at these have helped a number of our missionary partners. During the year three of our missionary partners visited us and told us a little about their work.

Bible Study Groups meet weekly on various days of the week. A Bible course, run by the Mission and Discipleship Group, was well supported by many church members. Two very successful concerts were organised by the Fellowship group and many people from the community attended. The proceeds of both were sent to Strathcarron Hospice. The group also ran the charity card sale with the proceeds going to Church funds.

Sadly, the Guild has had to cease meeting as, although there were many members, the necessary roles of President, Secretary and Treasurer could not be filled.

Cuppa Time meets weekly and provides a happy haven for many in the community.

Youth work continues with Sunday Club, Messy Church, Scripture Union in the local Primary School, assemblies and end of term services for the school and a link with Strathendrick Teens which supports young people from across Balfron, Drymen, Killearn and Strathblane.

Members of the congregation are kept abreast of what is happening in the church through the quarterly magazine which continues to be available online and also as e-copies for distribution by elders. Paper copies are also available for those unable to access online material.

The church family has been very supportive of all events held as part of our fellowship, whether by giving out tea and coffee at the end of the service, or arranging a Tearfund lunch or supplying home baking for other events.

	Budget Unrestricted Funds 2026 £	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Income					
Gift Aid	35,500	35,240		35,240	36,847
Open Plate	5,500	5,481		5,481	5,503
Other donations	1,500	1,605	1,973	3,578	3,385
Gift Day	1,400	1,395		1,395	1,736
Tax recovered on Gift Aid	10,900	10,843		10,843	11,292
Contributions from Church Organisations	0	781		781	682
Total voluntary income	54,800	55,345	1,973	57,318	59,445
Rental Income	1,200	1,215		1,215	1,909
Fund Raising	300	287	2,920	3,207	
Deposit interest	2,500	2,681	1,637	4,318	5,120
Dividends received	4,900	4,876	2,978	7,854	7,853
Weddings and Funerals	500	440		440	530
Income of Organisations	0		3,101	3,101	3,390
	64,200	64,844	12,609	77,453	79,315
Expenditure					
Giving to Grow	36,884	34,635		34,635	33,248
Presbytery Dues	862	821		821	849
Minister's Expenses	100	732		732	812
Locum	600	48		48	2,184
Pulpit Supply	800	570		570	640
Council Tax	0	1,599		1,599	1,429
Killeam Manse Costs	900	647		647	240
Fabric Repairs & Maintenance	3,500	2,870		2,870	3,051
Heat and Light	11,000	10,865		10,865	10,536
Insurance	3,300	3,692		3,692	3,639
Other Fabric Costs	25,000	200	2,400	2,600	8,387
Administration	5,000	8,611	500	9,111	5,738
Organ & Music	4,400	4,191		4,191	4,359
Youth Work	400	52		52	336
Outreach	1,200	1,095		1,095	1,141
Ground Maintenance	4,500	3,565		3,565	2,945
Other expenses	2,000	1,823	221	2,044	1,939
Expenditure of Organisations			5,585	5,585	3,459
Charitable Donations			3,867	3,867	1,047
	100,446	76,016	12,573	88,589	85,979
(Deficit)/Surplus	(36,246)	(11,172)	36	(11,136)	(6,664)
Unrealised (Loss)/Gain in Investments		7,890	4,818	12,708	11,703
Net movement in funds		(3,282)	4,854	1,572	5,039
Total funds brought forward		205,189	128,033	333,222	328,183
Total funds carried forward		201,907	132,887	334,794	333,222

Notes on Income and Expenditure

Our total income for 2025 is £77,453 (2024: £79,315). Open plate giving decreased by 0.4%. The giving received under gift aid decreased by 4.36%. Our rental income decreased from £1,909 to £1,215.

The costs of running the church continued and were £88,589 (2024: £85,979). The main cost, Giving to Grow, amounted to £34,635 (2024: £33,248).

Council Tax, Minister's Travel and Killlearn Manse costs are our share of the joint costs. Administration charge amounted to £9,111 (2024: £5,651). The increase is mainly due to the purchase of a new printer for £3,418. Administration also includes some joint costs. We have no employees. Cleaning, music and administration services are provided by local businesses and are included under those headings in the Accounts. Fabric expenditure was £2,600 (2024: £8,387). This mainly relates to obtaining valuations regarding the Manse Project. The Guild expenditure was £5,585 (2024: £3,459). This increase is a result of the Guild disbursing its funds before it was wound up.

Overall, we have made a deficit of £11,136 (2024: deficit £6,664) before unrealised gains on investments. Our investments have increased in value this year by £12,708.

The Budget

The 2025 budget shows a projected deficit of £36,246 in unrestricted funds.

Giving has been kept at 2024 levels. The largest expense is again the Giving to Grow. This figure is already fixed and is therefore actual. We have a fixed price contract for gas until 31 March 2026. The electricity contract ran out on 30 September when we started paying at a lower rate. The expenditure under the control of the Property Committee is budgeted to be £33,000. The major work required at the Church in 2026 relates to roof and stonework repairs, creation of Fellowship area and new carpeting. The Manse Project which is subject to approval by Presbytery and the General Trustees involves the creation of new Kirk Rooms on the Manse site. Surplus land including the Kirk Rooms' site would be sold. Land Valuers and Architects have been Appointed. The Project will extend into 2027. The budgeted cost for 2026 is £20,000

Assumptions for 2026 budget figures

1 Offerings budget is based on 2025 giving.

		Unrestricted
		£
2 Fabric Repairs & Maintenance		
	General Repairs, maintenance agreements	<u>3,500</u>
3 Other Fabric Costs		
Church	Plaster repairs and redecoration of affected area	4,000
	Roof repairs including missing slates	6,000
	Stonework Repairs	4,500
	Creation of Fellowship Area and Sanctuary Carpeting	5,000
	Door & Window Repairs	1,000
	Installation of Handrail at chancel	<u>500</u>
		21,000
Kirk Rooms	Annual roof maintenance	500
Manse	Repairs/replacement of gate and fences	1,500
	Repair pointing to joints in Fyfestone	500
	Roof maintenance including downpipes and gutters	<u>1,500</u>
		3,500
		<u>25,000</u>
4 Ground Maintenance		
	Annual soft landscaping	3,000
	Repairs to walls and hard landscaping and steps	1,500
		<u>4,500</u>
		<u>33,000</u>

The Balance Sheet shows the assets the congregation owns (Investments, Bank balances etc) and what we owe to others (the liabilities). The assets minus the liabilities represent our total funds.

One of the main assets is our investments. The Stock Market has risen a little this year resulting in an unrealised gain of £12,708. The other significant asset is the money we hold in our bank accounts totalling £103,321.

The funds are either restricted (specified by the donor how they have to be used) or unrestricted for general use.

The Kirk Session can designate (lay aside) funds for specific purposes (fabric and session). The statement below shows the movements in the restricted and designated funds.

	Restricted						Designated			
	Devment	Mission	Outreach	Window	Flower	Guild	Total	Fabric	Session	Total
	Fund	Fund	Fund	Fund	Fund	Fund		Fund	Fund	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance brought forward	46,264	7,777	68,358	2,926	225	2,483	128,033	14,774	8,550	23,324
Income										
Donations		1,834			137	3,102	5,073			
Fund raising		2,920							287	
Deposit interest	605	102	893	38			1,638	193	111	304
Dividends received	1,099	185	1,624	70			2,978	351	203	554
Organisations							0			
Total Income	1,704	5,041	2,517	108	137	3,102	12,609	544	601	1,145
Expenditure										
Fabric expenses	2,400						2,400	200		200
Donations		3,867					3,867			
Outreach/Youth							0		1,147	1,147
Examiner's Fee		500					500			
Flower Fund					221		221			
Organisations						5,585	5,585			
Total Expenditure	2,400	4,367	0	0	221	5,585	12,573	200	1,147	1,347
Investment Gain										
unrealised	1,779	299	2,628	112			4,818	568	329	897
Balance carried forward	47,347	8,750	73,503	3,146	141	0	132,887	15,686	8,333	24,019

GLASGOW CITY MISSION

Nancy Sharp

This year Glasgow City Mission enters its bicentennial year of service to the poor and marginalised in Glasgow. Two hundred years ago a young Christian man, David Nasmith, became troubled by the terrible poverty which was prevalent in Glasgow and he knew he had to do something about it. He was only 26 years old when he founded Glasgow City Mission which offered Christian care for people's physical, spiritual, emotional and practical needs. He succeeded in bringing together different Christian denominations to work together and care for the poor and needy. This was a very revolutionary concept at that time and his vision spread quickly to other cities in the UK and even to France, Canada and America.

- In 1831 the City Mission set up chimney schools for child chimney sweeps who would have no other opportunity for any education. They also set up Relief Stations for unemployed men to put them in contact with employers and provide them with packages of essentials like food and coal. Mission Halls were opened in some of the poorest areas of Glasgow to provide meeting places for fellowship, adult education, and recreation. The Mission always tried to expand to meet current needs as they emerged in a growing city.
- During the second World War the Mission ran a hostel for soldiers on leave who could not get home. They were given accommodation, food and could enjoy a quiet time in the reading room.
- In 1979 a night patrol was formed to provide prayer, sandwiches and hot drinks to people who were sleeping rough. Shortly afterwards, a weekly night shelter was opened in Maryhill and a drop-in service at the Sheiling in the city centre for the homeless and those facing other real challenges.
- In 1986 to help with the difficulties and challenges faced by some families, a creche and playgroup was set up in Govan. This grew into a Nursery and is now known as the Child and Family Centre and generations of the same families still attend and receive Christian support and love. They also have an after-school club and summer holiday clubs.

In the City Centre the Mission continues to support and meet the immediate needs of the homeless.

- At their Drop-in Centre they provide lunch and dinner from Monday – Friday and while there, project workers and volunteers connect with the guests in a relaxed manner at the tables. If there is a particular need, a project worker will spend time with that person to build a good relationship and, where necessary, get them extra support such as addiction support, help with form filling, legal advice or finding accommodation for them.
- From 1 st December to 31 st March the Mission opens its Overnight Welcome Centre to provide a warm, safe, welcoming place for people to sleep during the coldest winter months. The City Mission staff are fully trained to meet all difficult circumstances that may occur including giving medical care in the case of drugs overdoses. The Mission works in partnership with many other Agencies including Glasgow City Council to give appropriate care to guests.

This year various events are planned to celebrate this wonderful anniversary. A service of Thanksgiving was held in St. Silas Church in January.

14th May A Civic Reception will be held in Glasgow City Chambers.

15th -16th May Mission Conference in Queens Park Baptist Church. Tickets will become available for this through [Eventbrite](#)

17th May Celebration Service at Glasgow Cathedral

19th Sept. Big Arran Challenge

The Mission has also commissioned their own tartan this year. Various products e.g. ties, scarves, umbrellas or even a kilt can be bought which directly benefits vulnerable people in Glasgow.

Today, 200 years on, the Mission continues to live out Gospel in action by lifting broken people, feeding those who are hungry, sheltering the homeless and standing alongside those who are marginalised in society. All this is done in Christian love by staff and volunteers who truly believe that everyone is created in the image of God and, as such, deserve dignity by being shown compassion, love and support.



Impressions from the Glasgow City Mission pamphlet about the bicentennial, which can be found on the Glasgow City Mission website



THOMAS

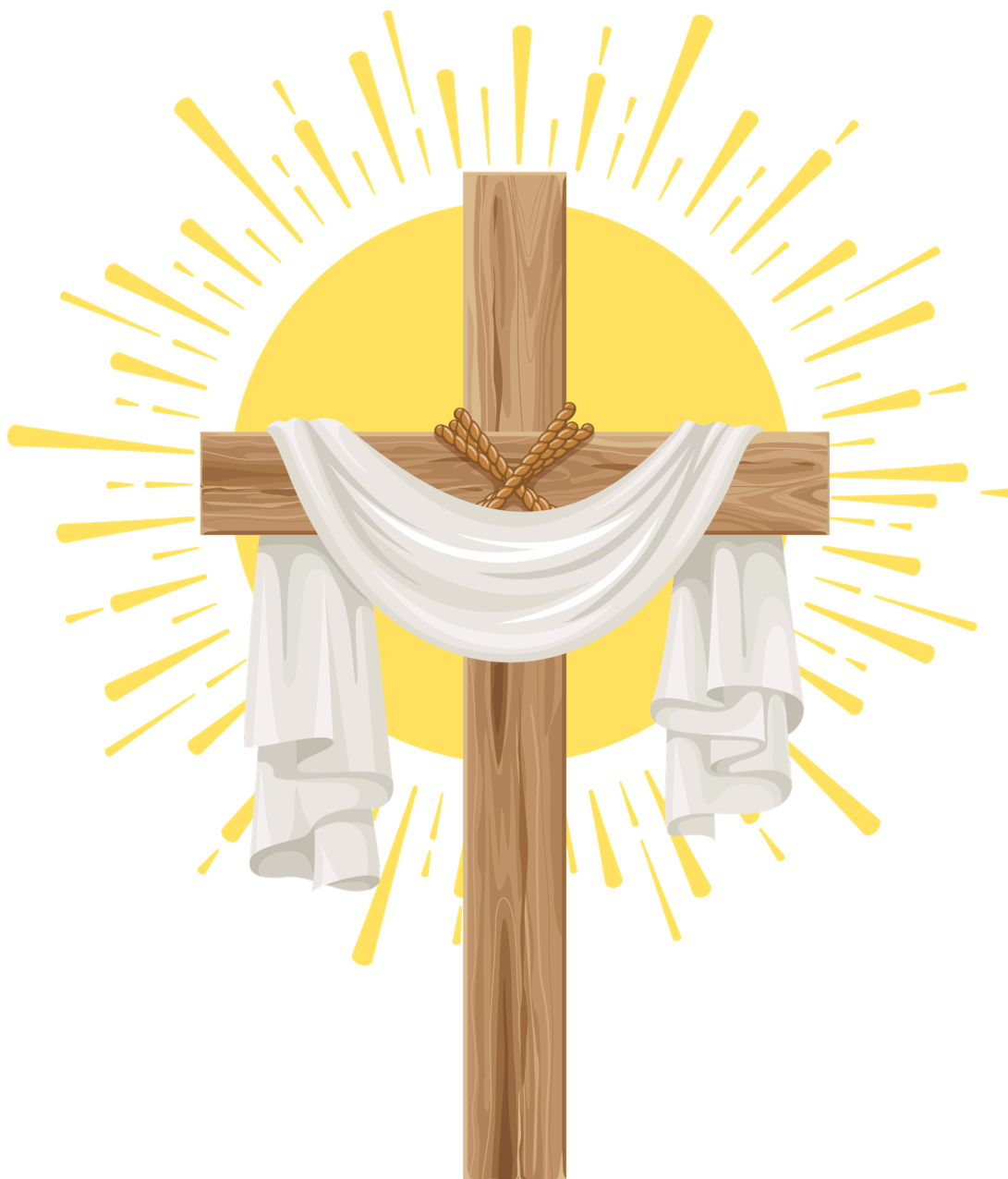
Christine Cresswell

The warmth had gone from the dying sun
 as I left them in the secluded room.
 Deep despair, bitter memories, the horror
 of His awful agony upon a criminal's tree;
 Jesus is dead - His body, cold in Joseph's tomb.
 The pain of grief, almost too much to bear,
 I left there, wandering through the shadows,
 but there's no peace, no comfort in Jerusalem's gloom.

With heavy heart I returned to my friends;
 how grim and uncertain our future will be.
 Then loud voices, laughter, cheer, each familiar face aglow.
 Excitedly they cried, "We've seen the Lord!" "He was here!"
 Confusion, disbelief, I just don't know - He'd died.
 Is this some cruel joke they're playing on me?
 "How can I know that Jesus is alive
 unless I feel each nail-torn hand, touch His wounded side."

A week later, as we're all in the same room,
 suddenly, through the locked door, Jesus came!
 It was the most amazing sight I've ever seen!
 Was this a ghost, or some strange dream?
 "Peace be with you," He said, and called my name.
 Trembling, I fell at His feet in joy and awe,
 and saw where nails had pierced His hands,
 the spear, his side. "My Lord and my God!" I cried.
 Gently, He told me to stop doubting, and believe.
 "How blessed are those who have not seen Me and yet believe."

I've been called "Doubting Thomas" through the years,
but in times of sorrow, pain and distress,
maybe you, too, experience doubt and fears,
especially in the long, dark night.
But Jesus IS alive! He's near to all who believe,
who live by faith and not by sight,
He's here to comfort and to bless
in whatever our circumstance or place.
One day you, too, may have this greatest joy
of seeing our living Saviour, face to face!



THE FAITHFUL AND THE TRAITORS

Ian Mills

I am not a person who normally follows TV series. So when someone begins a conversation with 'Have you been watching ...', I have to confess I am one of the minority (so it is claimed), who do not get hooked even if it is the type of series where the end of one episode leaves you in suspense such that you have to ensure you tune in again at the start of the next episode!

Recently, being housebound with a viral infection and (being a man), feeling sorry for myself, I took the opportunity to watch Celebrity Traitors on BBC I Player as apparently, according to the younger members in our family, we were the only household on the planet which had not followed the programme! The advantage in using the iPlayer was being able to avoid time gaps between episodes! I am sure many will be familiar with the format of the programme in which a group of people gather, three of whom are selected in advance by the programme presenter as the Traitors, with the remainder being the Faithful. The Traitors meet daily in secret to select one of the Faithful to be 'murdered' overnight. In addition, a vote takes place each evening at a Round Table involving those remaining with the aim of identifying a Traitor who is then banished. Inevitably, the vote sometimes results in one of the Faithful being banished by mistake which can lead to frustration amongst many of the Faithful in their inability to identify Traitors. The viewer is reminded that this is purely a game which will generate prize money for charity. I must admit I found it quite compelling with the scenic views of the Scottish Highlands, following the 'missions' undertaken daily which rely on everyone working together to generate prize money and in particular, the human interaction and plotting as the Faithful seek to identify the Traitors.

Harmless entertainment? - maybe, maybe not. But yet the concept of the Faithful and the Traitors was certainly prevalent in biblical times. The term 'Traitor' normally referred to individuals who had betrayed trust, allegiance or loyalty. Judas Iscariot is probably the most infamous biblical 'Traitor' and one of the few to feature in the New Testament. The Old Testament covers a much longer period of time involving the history of Israel, power struggles and tribal conflicts resulting in more examples of betrayal, eg Cain and Abel, Joseph's brothers, Delilah, Absalom. The reaction to acts of betrayal differs between the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, certain forms of betrayal were considered capital offences, whereas in the New Testament, the influence of the teachings of Jesus recognised acts of repentance as offering the opportunity to forgive.

Biblical examples of the 'Faithful' could include Moses, Abraham and David from the Old Testament with Simeon, Paul and the Disciples from the New Testament. Commentators have noted that the word 'faith' rarely appears in the Old Testament although the concept is frequently referred to - eg Noah acted in faith when he built the ark, similarly Moses

acted in faith when leading the Israelites out of Egypt. In addition, more reference is made to the covenants which God entered into with people and in keeping these covenants he is described as 'faithful'. In the New Testament, the concept of 'faith in God' also includes an element of trust or assurance.

In the church today, it would be unusual to label anyone a 'Traitor', whereas 'Faithful' is an expression used frequently to describe those members who actively attend and participate in the life and ministry of the church. Every church is dependent on the contribution made by 'the faithful' and indeed the same could be said for various voluntary organisations and groups which would not function were it not for the commitment made by a loyal group of 'faithful' individuals.

As we in Strathblane (along with the congregation in Killearn) will shortly be moving ahead with arrangements to fill the current ministerial vacancy, the 'faithful' will require to support one another as we are guided to a conclusion.



CUPPA TIME

Georgina Marshall

In preparation for Christmas Fiona MacDougall came along and helped us make Christmas decorations and Christmas wreaths. A wonderful time was had by all. Just before Burns Night we had a Burns quiz and Rosalyn McGowan came along and played for us.

On the 2nd of April, which is Maundy Thursday, we are having our Easter Special. Please come along and join us even if you don't usually come. There will be afternoon tea, a quiz and Tamara will be along to lead our singing.



DONATION THANKS

Sandra Ritchie

A big thank you to everyone for filling up the boxes as you come into Church for Start Up Stirling. I have made a few trips now with food for them and they are so appreciative of all that we give them. We are all so fortunate in all that God provides.

Thanks very much.

FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Ella Hyam

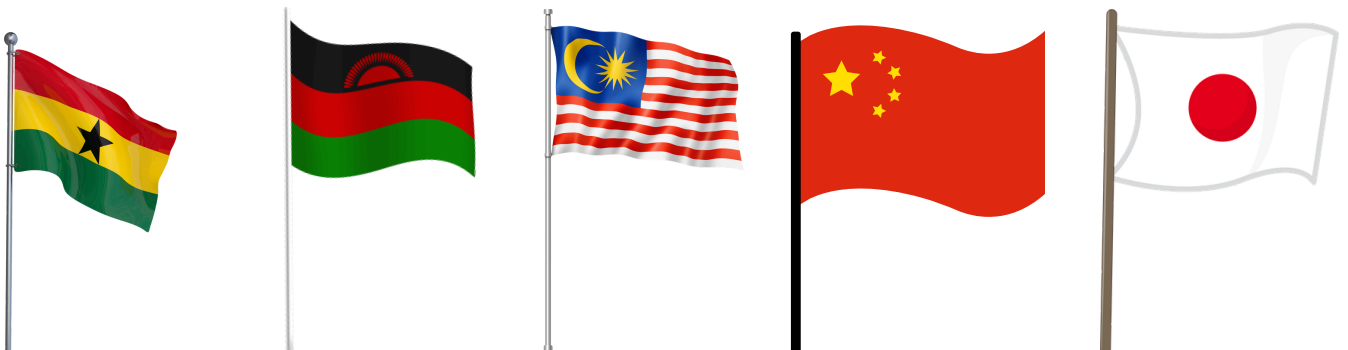
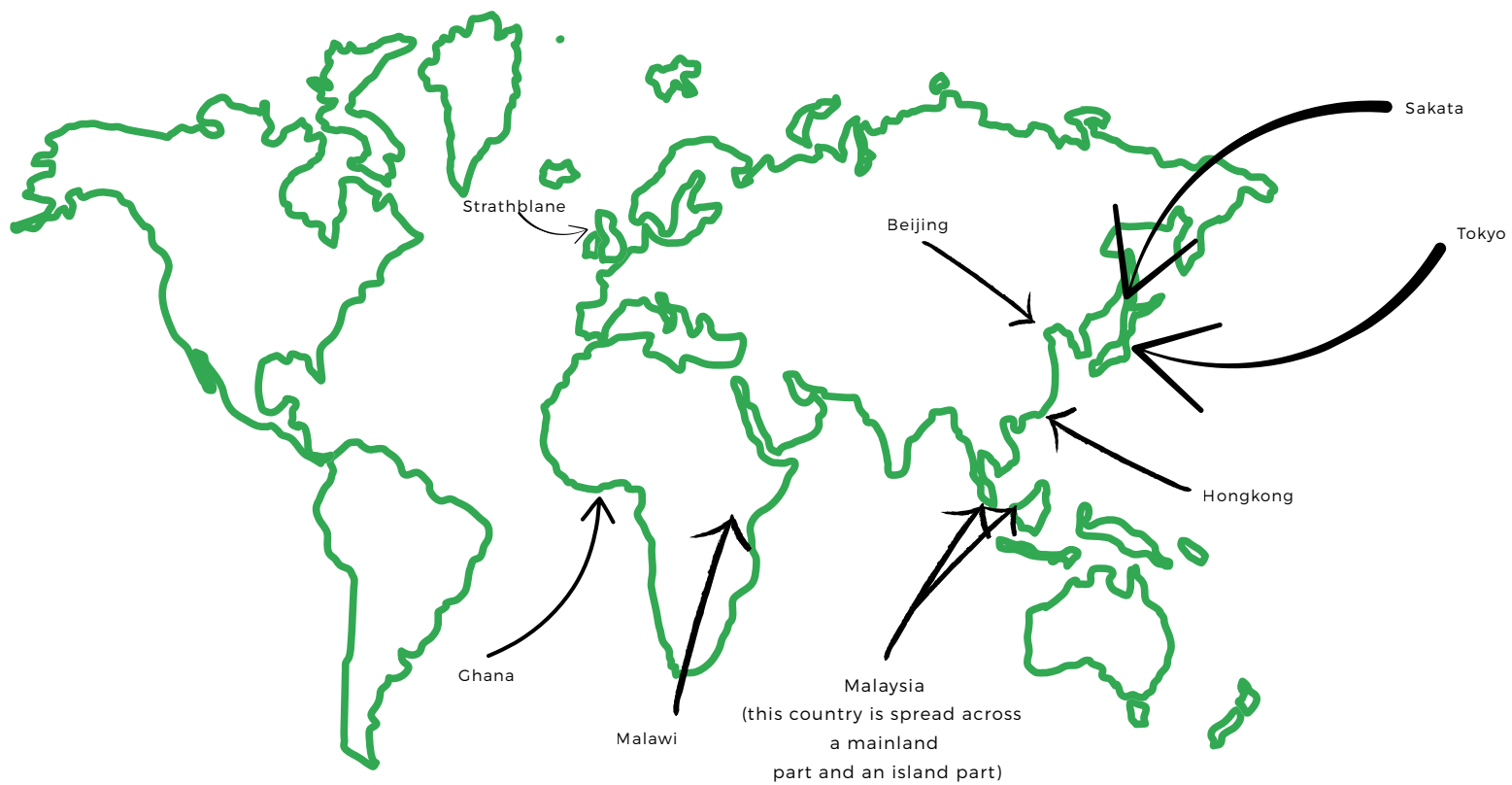
The Fellowship Group would like to say a very big THANK YOU to everyone who supported the 'Winter and Christmas Jingle' in December. Special thanks goes to George Thom who organised the concert.

We collected £1800 in ticket money on the night, and a further £636.45 was collected by The Crooners using a QR code and a bucket collection. This meant we donated an amazing total of £2436.45 to Strathcarron Hospice.



MISSIONARY NEWS

This little graphic is intended to give our readers a better idea of roughly where the different localities mentioned in our articles are within the world and where they are in relation to Scotland.





At the start of February *Lorna* told us that it could be another couple of months before Sakata would really see the sun again. She was reviving her snow-shovelling and winter driving skills from when the family had lived in Hokkaido.

It may be winter but she is not hibernating. She hosted Pastor Kizu's family at Christmas - dinner for 7 cooked in her tiny Japanese kitchen. She is leading Sunday school and is helping individuals in the town; and on a global scale she is training OMF's international safeguarding response team.

For the end of February there are plans underway for a children's English class which will include a Bible story.



Catherine has told us about English classes based on Bible stories when she has visited us on several occasions over the past 20 years. The classes she has led are for female migrants who have a Muslim background and are living near Barcelona. Work is continuing there while Catherine is currently at home in Glasgow, completing studies.



Carolyn continues her work to support and train Returnee Focus colleagues from around the world, mostly on-line. She is a leader in the church in Kirkcaldy, which in the last few weeks has involved preaching duty, a Day of Prayer, and a leadership team Away Day. Some members of our congregation may remember Carolyn's visits to us when she worked in Manila's slums in the Philippines, at the start of her work with OMF. She was recently looking forward to a visit from Sabine, her co-worker from this time. There might have been some reminiscing!



James and Kirsty have both taken individual retreats over the past month. A take-home prayer has been that they/we would not be distracted by or invested in things that are merely temporary but rather live in a way that makes a difference in eternity. "...So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4 v 18

The Returnee Focus ministry, with which James & Kirsty and Carolyn work, now operates in 19 countries. New workers have recently been welcomed in Singapore and the Netherlands.



CHANGING LIVES MALAWI

Sarah Black

Thanks to donations we received, we were able to provide funds for the local elderly people to have a Christmas lunch together. They also listened to music and, those who were able, were up dancing. Each person received a bar of soap to take home. This event was such a success, and appreciated by the vulnerable elderly people, we would like to be able to provide a lunch club for them once a month. This would



help to prevent isolation and ensure they know that people care about them as well as ensuring the elderly had a nutritious lunch together. Would you like to help fund this lunch club project? Do you know others who might help?



Hundreds of children had another enjoyable Christmas party and they also had lunch, music and games and we thank the donors who provided money towards this. You can see, in the photo, some of them standing in front of "Christine Cresswell's classroom". The money collected at mum's 80th birthday last year went towards building classrooms at Bright Futures Secondary School... thank you for the contributions!

Recently, a container arrived and boxes were collected. Unfortunately, this journey wasn't straightforward for Levison and team. Their truck was moving slowly and targeted by robbers who tore the tarpaulin and stole three boxes before Levison and team realised what was happening. Thankfully, they scared the robbers away before they grabbed more boxes. Unfortunately, once they arrived home, three days were spent drying out all the contents of boxes as it's currently the rainy season. Levison and I also spent the first day trying to match up box numbers and contents with my

list of which projects they are for as the labels were ruined by the heavy rain. Such are the difficulties they face in Malawi. We don't realise how hard life can be.

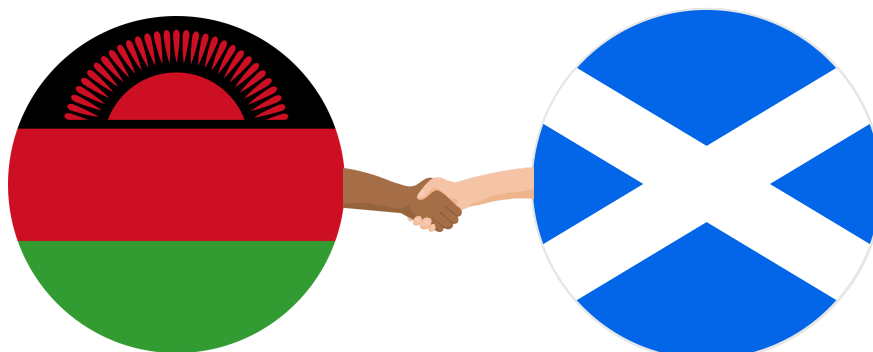
One of our supporters made lots of bags from recycling fabric. I called them 'bags of kindness' in one of my blogs. They were given to female teachers, staff and female volunteers along with bars of soap. Everyone was delighted with their surprise gifts. We had lots of men's shirts donated, so all the male volunteers, staff and teachers will be given a shirt each.



We had collected lots of shoes and trainers and again staff, volunteers, and teachers, as well as students at Bright Futures Secondary School were given a pair of shoes this week... everyone was so happy and thankful.

Some exciting news... on 20th May, I will be heading to Malawi for the first time to visit our projects. I'm going for two weeks and thankfully not on my own. My friend and fellow trustee, Liz Mottram (who is an elder at Balfron Church) is coming with me. We have paid for our own flights, vaccinations, insurance etc... but we are asking for donations to help with hiring a car in Malawi. This will be far safer than trying to travel long distances by bus or minibus. Would you like to support us with a financial donation please? And can you please support us in prayer? Please pray for our safety as we travel and that our time is used to best advantage whilst there. Hopefully, on our return, we can share photos and videos about the trip. contact_us@changinglivesmalawi.com is our email address. Or you can get in touch by sending a message to 07985315007 or via our website www.changinglivesmalawi.com

Or speak to mum, Christine Cresswell. Thank you so much for everyone's continued support and prayers. Blessings, Sarah x



EASTER DATES

29th March Palm Sunday
Killearn 10 a.m. Strathblane 11.30
Chris Gordon

2nd April Maundy Thursday Evening Service will be held together with all the churches in
the Strathendrick Grouping at Drymen Church

7 p.m.
Rev. Alex Smeed

School Service at Strathblane Kirk
Thursday 2nd April
1.45 p.m

3rd April Good Friday
Together with Killearn here at Strathblane
7 p.m. Chris Gordon

Pre-church breakfast and Easter Egg Hunt for Messy Church families, and anyone else who
would like to come, on Easter Sunday at 10.30 a.m

5th April Easter Sunday Morning
Killearn 10. a.m. Strathblane 11.30 a.m.
Chris Gordon

REGULAR EVENTS

Every Sunday: 11:30 am Sunday Worship, church & Sunday Club

Every Wednesday: 7pm Prayer Time, Kirk Rooms

Every Thursday: 2pm Cuppa Time, Kirk Rooms

KEY CONTACTS

Your Minister
in vacancy
Locum: Chris Gordon
CGordon@churchofscotland.org.uk

Session Clerk
Mrs Lynne James
07796 871607
lynnej1257@gmail.com

Treasurer
Mrs Jean Strachan
01360 770143
jhmstrachan@gmail.com

Church Office
strathblanekirk@gmail.com



www.strathblanekirk.co.uk



www.facebook.com/StrathblaneKirk